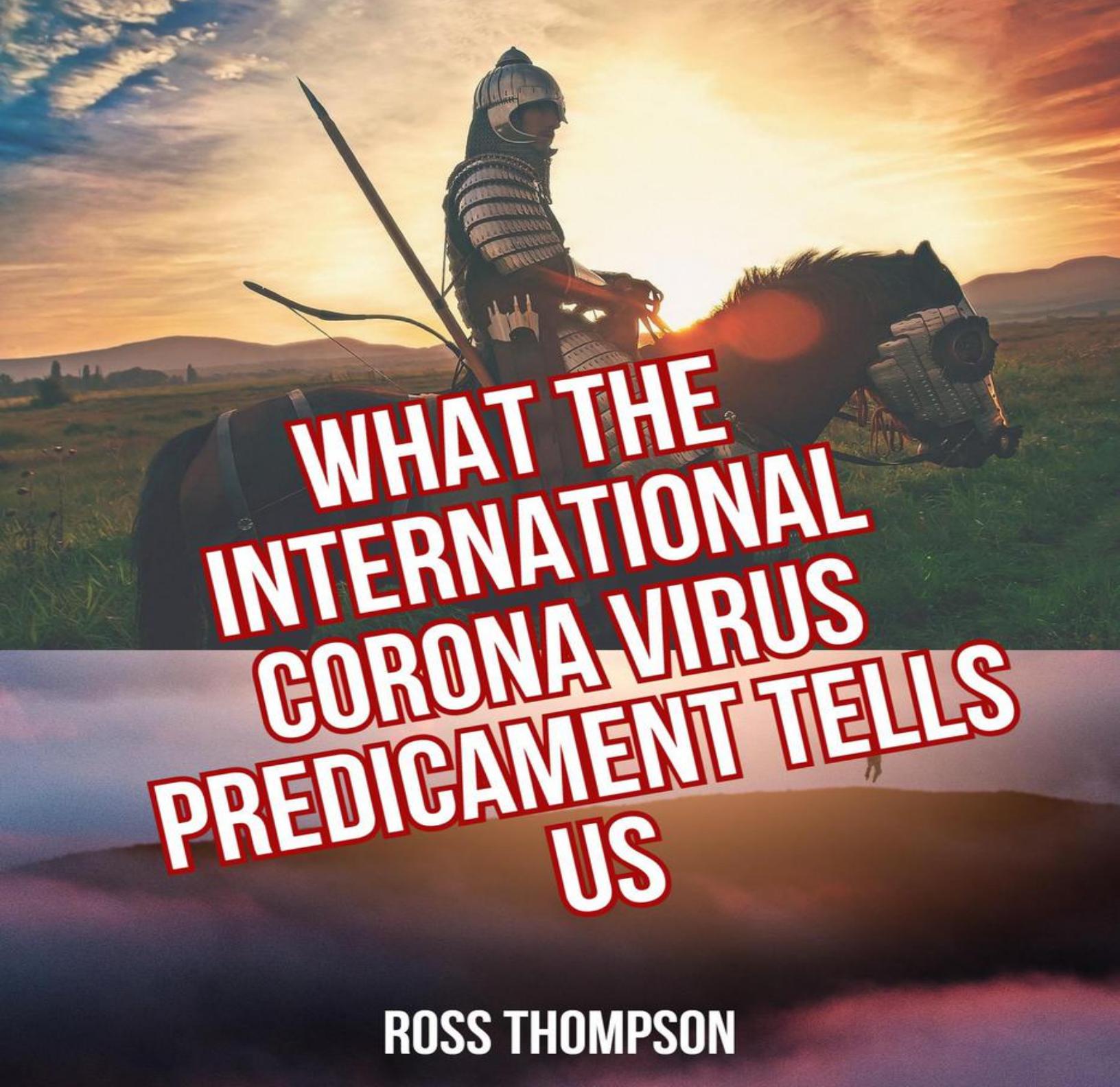


THE SOUND OF THE HORSEMEN

A dramatic photograph of a knight in full armor, including a helmet and chainmail, riding a dark horse. The knight is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset or sunrise sky, with the sun low on the horizon. The horse is rearing slightly, kicking up dust. The background shows a vast, open landscape with distant hills under the colorful sky.

**WHAT THE
INTERNATIONAL
CORONA VIRUS
PREDICAMENT TELLS
US**

ROSS THOMPSON

The Sound of the Horsemen

Ross Thompson

Published by Ross Thompson, 2020.

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THE HORSEMEN

The vision of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse - chapter six in the Bibles last book – Revelation, is for a specific time in the progress of World history. The horsemen can be loosely described as war, famine, plague and pestilence, death and hell. Although, if you read the chapter you will find a lot more is involved than those descriptions. Many people today are familiar with the contents of the book Of Revelation through the Left Behind fiction series, which had sales of 80 million.

Jesus gave what amounts to a brief summary of the book of Revelation, recorded in Mathews Gospel chapter twenty-four. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He has never spoken a word that is not truth nor given a prediction that has not come to pass. Despite our best efforts we have always had, and according to Jesus, will always have, wars, famines, plagues and pestilence brought about by the majorities desire to live independently of God in the world. Saint Paul described that majority as being... "*without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*" (*Ephesians chapter 2 verse 12*)

Speaking about these things Jesus said, "*And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled for all these things must come to pass. But the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these things are the beginning of sorrows.*" (*Mathew chapter 24 verses 5-8*) Definitely bad news. Paradoxically the very fact Jesus was

here to tell us these things is good news. More on that later in the book. The four horsemen will arrive in full force in the time period Jesus calls “the end”. Although we are living in the time period Jesus called “the beginning of sorrows,” it is almost certain we are near, or at the end, of that period. Almost 2000 years have passed since Jesus spoke these things to His disciples. In that time His words have been fulfilled over and over in multiplied sorrows. Countless wars, innumerable famines, earthquakes, and plagues and pestilence almost continuously. Each of those wars, every famine, every pestilence, plague and earthquake, was/is the harbinger, the indicator, the forewarning, the sound, of the approaching horsemen.

God told the Prophet Daniel much about the history and future of the world. Chapter twelve verse four of the Old Testament book of Daniel, has this statement; *“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”* A distinction of the - time of the end - is that many will run to and fro and knowledge will increase. A better description of our day you could not find. Millions (before this virus outbreak) travel globally, we run to and fro in our cars, and the advance of knowledge has reached a peak, with the internet a major vehicle of that.



PREDICTION

Jesus started Mathew chapter 24 by telling His disciples of the coming destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. His prediction was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Romans overran Jerusalem destroying the city and the temple in the war against the Jewish rebel Zealots, who had formed a Government in opposition to the Roman occupation. History provides ample evidence of wars, nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom from the time of Christ to our present day. Of famines, pestilences (outbreaks of severe rapidly spreading disease) and earthquakes there have been many.

Ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire perished during the Antonine plague, probably smallpox, which swept through the four points of the compass in A.D.165-180. In 1852 John Radcliffe of the Leeds School of Medicine wrote a book recording pestilences, famines and earthquakes in the British Isles from earliest times. Here is a brief list from the book. *England* A.D. 61 severe famine - A.D. 88 pestilence - A.D. 110 severe earthquake - A.D. 133 a great drought - A.D. 211 pestilence and earthquake - A.D. 293 famine and pestilence - A.D. 325 severe famine and pestilence - A.D. 336,355,358,362,367,368,375 - disease, famine and earthquake. *Scotland* A.D. 92 pestilence - A.D. 146 pestilence - A.D. 222 pestilence. *Wales* A.D. 114 pestilence - A.D. 310 pestilence - A.D. 336 - 375 pestilence, famine, earthquake. *Italy* A.D.174 a great pestilence. In the fifth century rapidly spreading outbreaks of disease prevailed across Asia, Africa, Europe, England and Scotland. Multiplied thousands perished in these devastations. Many

books would be filled in recording the global incidences of these sorrows through history to the present day. The Irish potato famine 1845 – 1849, the great bubonic plague of London, and the 1918 flu epidemic which killed 20 million worldwide, are three most of us are aware of.

In the latter part of history we have had to deal with Anthrax, Malaria, Typhoid, Yellow fever, Scarlet fever, Diphtheria, Tuberculosis, West Nile virus, Syphilis, Smallpox, Rabies, Rubella, Hepatitis, Mumps, Viral Meningitis, Measles, Herpes, Legionnaires Disease, Dengue fever, Botulism, Polio, and many more. It is reported some of the old infections are re-emerging through laxness or mutation. Re-emerging diseases include Malaria, Tuberculosis, Cholera, Pertussis (whooping cough), Influenza, Pneumococcal disease, Gonorrhoea and Polio.



VIRUSES

Although we know many of histories devastating diseases were the result of ignorance regarding sanitation, personal hygiene and accurate medical knowledge, we should not let those facts obscure a deeper problem. In a word - viruses. All epidemics of serious disease past and present were/are the manifestation of virus infection. Viruses are an entrenched unchanging menace to life on earth. Following are quotes from scientific sources that give an overview of what is known of viruses

*Quotes****

The evolutionary history of viruses represents a fascinating, albeit murky, topic for virologists and cell biologists. Because of the great diversity among viruses, biologists have struggled with how to classify these entities and how to relate them to the conventional tree of life. They may represent genetic elements that gained the ability to move between cells. They may represent previously free-living organisms that became parasites. They may be the precursors of life as we know it. (*David R Wessner PHD*)

Where Did Viruses Come From? There is much debate among virologists about this question. Three main hypotheses have been articulated: 1. The progressive, or escape hypothesis states that viruses arose from genetic elements that gained the ability to move between cells; 2. the regressive, or reduction hypothesis asserts that viruses are remnants of cellular organisms; and 3. the virus-first hypothesis states that viruses predate or coevolved with their current cellular hosts. (*David R Wessner PHD*)

To date, no clear explanation for the origin(s) of viruses exists. Viruses may have arisen from mobile genetic elements that gained the ability to move between cells. They may be descendants of previously free-living organisms that adapted a parasitic replication strategy. Perhaps viruses existed before, and led to the evolution of, cellular life. Continuing studies may provide us with clearer answers. Or future studies may reveal that the answer is even murkier than it now appears. (*David R Wessner PhD*)

These studies have shown us that viruses do not have a single origin; that is, they did not all arise from one single virus that changed and evolved into all the viruses we know today. Viruses probably have a number of independent origins, almost certainly at different times.

(*theconversation.com May 29, 2018*)

New coronavirus - so what do we think happened in the case of SARS-CoV-2? Recent analysis of the genome suggest that the virus had been circulating in a similar form to today for approximately 40 years. The closest relative of the virus that we can identify is one found in bats. However, this virus and SARS-CoV-2 probably shared a common ancestor approximately 40-70 years ago, and so this bat virus is not the cause of the outbreak.

Although these viruses share a common ancestor, 40 years of evolution since then has separated them. This means that SARS-CoV-2 may have jumped to humans from bats, or it may have come via an intermediate species. Closely related viruses have been found in pangolins, for example. But the exact path of the genetically distinct SARS-CoV-2 will remain a mystery until we are able to find closer relative species in the environment

It is also unclear what changed in the virus to allow it to infect humans so easily. However, given that three major diseases have emerged from the coronavirus family in the last 20 years - SARS, MERS and COVID-19 - it is likely that this will not be the last time a coronavirus jumps into

humans and causes a new disease outbreak. (*Naomi Forrester-Soto theconversation.com*)

Viruses infiltrate every aspect of our natural world, seething in seawater, drifting through the atmosphere, and lurking in minuscule motes of soil. Generally considered non-living entities, these pathogens can only replicate with the help of a host, and they are capable of hijacking organisms from every branch of the tree of life—including a multitude of human cells.

Yet, most of the time, our species manages to live in this virus-filled world relatively free of illness. The reason has less to do with the human body's resilience to disease than the biological quirks of viruses themselves, says Sara Sawyer, a virologist and disease ecologist at the University of Colorado Boulder. These pathogens are extraordinarily picky about the cells they infect, and only an infinitesimally small fraction of the viruses that surround us (about 200) actually pose any threat to humans.

Still, as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrates, outbreaks of new human viruses do happen—and they are not as unexpected as they might seem.

To better forecast and prevent outbreaks, scientists are homing in on the traits that may explain why some viruses, and not others, can make the hop into humans. Some mutate more frequently, perhaps easing their spread into new hosts, while others are helped along by human encounters with animals that provide opportunities to jump species. (*Katherine J Wu National Geographic April 15, 2020*)

What is the difficulty in creating a virus vaccine? To begin with, viruses mutate very quickly. Made up of ribonucleic acid (RNA), as this genetic material exists on a single strand, unlike a double-stranded DNA, it easily gets cut up and remixed once broken. This enables viruses to mutate quickly, meaning that any cures or vaccines made for a specific RNA may quickly become obsolete

Although vaccines have worked well in thwarting certain versions of viruses - the recurrence of polio in some countries thanks to a new mutated version immune to previous vaccines is a good example of how difficult it is to thwart viruses even once a vaccine has been made.

More than this, vaccines generally take many years to reach the market as they must go through six developmental steps including a three-phase clinical development stage. This means that, by the time an effective vaccine has been developed and approved as safe-to-use, the emergency may have blown over. Alternatively, if urgency declines to develop a vaccine as infection rates diminish thanks to other factors, research on the vaccine is likely to stall and become neglected, as what happened with the SARS vaccine. (*Annie Lennon - Labroots.com Feb 21, 2020*)

Viruses do not, however, carry out metabolic processes. Most notably, viruses differ from living organisms in that they cannot generate ATP. They do not possess ribosomes and cannot independently form proteins from molecules of messenger RNA. Because of these limitations, viruses can replicate only within a living host cell. Therefore, viruses are obligate intracellular parasites. According to a stringent definition of life, they are nonliving. (*David R Wessner PhD*)

*End of Quotes****

Though it is far from proven, virologists and others are beginning to suspect viruses may be involved in such ailments as rheumatoid arthritis, schizophrenia, cancer and heart disease. Viruses are predators and parasites from beyond the normal processes of life. They present a mystery and a major hazard. They are hard to track, replicate themselves quickly, mutate into newer versions of the original, and demand constant vigilance on the part of science to keep pace with the threat they pose.



GOOD NEWS

Jesus gave us one more marker for the time of the end. This time it is good news. Again, in Mathew chapter 24 verse 14. **"And this gospel (a good message, good news) of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."** By the gospel of the kingdom, Jesus meant the good news of the rule of God. In other parts of the New Testament He called it the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. A similar verse appears in the book of Revelation chapter 14. **"And I saw another angel flying through the sky, carrying the eternal Good News to proclaim to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people. "Fear God," he shouted. "Give glory to him. For the time has come when he will sit as judge. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the springs of water."**

The apostle Paul explained the message of the gospel to the Corinthian Christians. **"Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. You will be saved by this message, if you hold firmly to it. But if you do not, your faith was all for nothing. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. that He appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles.**

After that, He was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then He was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw Him.....Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”

The apostle Peter put it this way in his preaching to his Jewish listeners, “**And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”**

Finally, we have Jesus’ own description from the Bibles book of John. “**For this is how God loved the world: He gave his unique Son so that everyone who believes in Him, who trusts in, clings to and relies upon Him, might not be lost but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. That the world may be made safe and sound through Him.”**

Jesus’ salvation is for every nation, tribe, and all people, but it must be received individually by each person. Each person must make a decision to accept Jesus’ salvation and personally ask God to come and rule in their lives. It must be born of a genuine heartfelt desire to commit your life into God’s hands. Of course, you can reject Jesus’ offer of salvation. Then you are on your own. As the apostle Paul described in the first chapter of this book – **you will be without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world.** That is a dangerous position to be in, but God will respect your decision. He always does that. I can tell you He will be disappointed, even saddened, but He will let you go your own way. Such is the power of choice He has given to each one of us.

God will know when the gospel of the kingdom has been preached to all the world. Then the end will come. It seems

to have largely happened. In our day the message of the gospel has crisscrossed the globe by Television, Radio, Missionaries, short term travelling preachers, establishment of new churches, literature, books, Bible distribution, translation of the Bible and literature into hundreds of languages, various technologies and the internet.



POWER

How is God's kingdom related to the gospel message? The two cannot be divided. The message of the gospel is not theory or information only. These days we have a vast amount of information from the internet. God was referring to that when He told Daniel the prophet knowledge would increase. Wherever the message of Jesus has been reduced to just information, people are not impacted. As an example, I recently watched a YouTube video on the group of islands off the coast of Africa called the Cape Verde archipelago. Many churches appeared in the video, but they were mostly empty, and it appeared few, if any, people had found the reality of God in their lives. The people pass the churches every-day in their towns, but the old historic buildings mean nothing to them.

When the gospel of the kingdom of God comes into our lives, the power and protection of God comes with it. For a start it will change you, in a big way. Before he met Jesus, the apostle Paul was a mean man. His one aim was to destroy as many Christians as possible. He was entirely unmoved to see Christians stoned to death, and whole families thrown into prison. After an encounter with Jesus he became a man of love who thought nothing of suffering and risking his life to preach the gospel of the kingdom to as many people as possible. You can read about his change in the book of Acts in the New Testament.

Jesus certainly changed my (the author) life. I grew up in a family who knew nothing of religion. I did not know what was in the Bible. I tended to despise anything to do with the Bible and religious people. After almost destroying myself

through excessive drinking, I was in a desperate place with no help in sight. Thank God, He caused me to cross paths with a man who told me about the gospel of the kingdom and Jesus Christ. I was ready to listen. That was more than forty years ago, and I could fill a book with the many things God has done for me over that time. It's real!



PROTECTION

Two paragraphs back I mentioned the protection of God.

If we receive Jesus' salvation, we immediately put ourselves under the protection of God. A verse in the Old Testaments book of Psalms – Psalm 91 verse 1 – says this: **"He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob."** That means the person (he or she) who lives allowing God to aid them, will be continually protected by God. Here are some other translations of that verse.

"As for you, the one who lives in the shelter of the sovereign One, and resides in the protective shadow of the mighty king."

"Whoever goes to the LORD for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty."

"The one who lives under the protection of the Most High, dwells in the shadow of the Almighty, whose power no foe can withstand."

That brings me back to the title of this book. It might surprise you to know the Bible has a special section where God promises to protect His own from viruses, plagues and deadly disease. I will come back to that passage further on in the book. The quote from the apostle Paul in the second paragraph of this book said those who do not know God through Jesus, are **strangers from the covenants of promise**. The Bible is full of promises from God for those who love Him. A covenant is a deed or legal agreement. The promises of the Bible are His legal agreement telling us all He will do for those who genuinely accept Jesus salvation.

Before I met Jesus, I knew nothing about the Bible. I did not know it was full of God's promises. I was a stranger to those promises. I was not living under God's protection, and I suffered and almost came to an untimely end because of it. Once I said yes to Jesus, I began to benefit from God's legal agreement to do many things for those who love Him. Some wealthy people employ security companies to guard them day and night. Just a week before the writing of this book, a man attempted to get into the White House to attack the President of the United States, Donald Trump. The assailant did not make it through the front gate because the Secret Service staff who protect the President stopped him. Imagine how much more the God who created this world and everything in it, including ourselves, is able to protect us.

In another section of the New Testament the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians asking that they might "**understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him.**" President Trump, after the incident mentioned above, publicly thanked the Secret Service people for the work they do. The assailant was wounded, and a Secret Service officer was also shot. At that time President Trump commented that it is a dangerous world we live in. That is true for many people. I live in Australia which is a peaceful country. Many countries are not always peaceful, and some have many dangers. Possibly that is the state of things where you live. God who sees the past, the present, and the future, is able to protect you no matter what circumstances surround you. One of my favourite Bible promises is found in the Bible's book of Ephesians. "**Now to Him (God) who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us.**"



PSALM - 91

The passage of the Bible, I mentioned earlier, that promises protection from viruses (contagious disease) is found in the Old Testament book of Psalms – Psalm 91. I have put it here in full, from the Living Bible, which is a translation of the Bible in today's English language. You can buy a Living Bible wherever Bibles are sold. I will not make any comment about this passage because it speaks for itself.

Psalm 91.

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I trust Him.

For He will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. He will cover you with His feathers. He will shelter you with His wings. His faithful promises are your armour and protection. Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day.

Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday. Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you make the LORD your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. For He will order His angels to protect you wherever you go. They will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone. You will trample upon lions and cobras; you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!

The LORD says, “I will rescue those who love me. I will protect those who trust in my name. When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble. I will rescue and honour them. I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation.”



FEAR

What is it people fear from the Corona virus? They fear the suffering the sickness causes, but it goes deeper than that. They fear death. All people who are ungodly (meaning without God in their lives) fear death. I do not need to tell you about death. People die all the time. We all know death comes to everybody in the end. The singing group - Blind Boys from Alabama - have a song that says, "*I look around, somebodies gone, who was here last year.*" A Christian song has these words, "*There's a lot more laying down than there is up walking around. There's a lot more six feet deep than there is out there on the street.*" Of course, Christians die also. But there is a big difference in facing death when you know what is coming after and facing death with no hope and no knowledge of where you are going.

The fourth horseman of Revelation's vision is two riders. It says the fourth horseman is death, and hell followed him. Jesus described hell in a story He told of two men. A rich man who had rejected God during his life. The other a beggar who had trusted God. It is in the Bible's book of Luke.

"The rich man also died and was buried, and he went to hell, There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side. The rich man shouted, "Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames." But Abraham said to him, "Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a

great chasm separating us. No one can cross over to you from here, and no one can cross over to us from there.”

I will finish this book with a comforting word from Jesus to the apostle John, from the book of Revelation.

“When I saw him (Jesus), I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, “Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hell.”

I don’t know about you – but I’m sticking with Jesus.